

Brazos River and Associated Bay and Estuary System Basin and Bay Stakeholder Committee (BBASC) Meeting

Tuesday, August 23, 2011 at 10:00 am

Brazos River Authority Offices

Waco, Texas

Minutes

Introductions

BBASC chair Dale Spurgin called the meeting to order and members introduced themselves.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of June 28, 2011 meeting minutes

The minutes of the June 28, 2011 meeting minutes were approved without changes.

Brazos River Authority Drought Update – Brad Brunett (BRA)

BBASC alternate Brad Brunett provided an update to the group on the status of the BRA reservoir system in the midst of the ongoing drought. He said that the Brazos River above Possum Kingdom Reservoir has gone dry and showed a picture of the dry river bed at the Seymour location. The basin is experiencing its lowest rainfall and reservoir inflow amounts historically. Currently, the BRA reservoir system is approximately 70% full, and the whole system is in at least a stage 1 drought watch. If drought conditions persist (i.e., no rainfall), the system is projected to be about 62% full at the end of September, and about 57% full at the end of October.

Basin and Bay Expert Science Team (BBEST) update – Phil Price (BRA)

BBEST member Phil Price gave the BBASC an update on the activities of the expert science team. He said that the team remains focused on the same USGS flow gages as previously presented to the BBASC, but they are investigating the appropriate periods of record to use for three gages: Brazos River near Palo Pinto, near Glen Rose, and at Waco. The biologists in the group have been evaluating available fish data from throughout the basin and have noted that certain minnow species are absent from the middle Brazos River, which could indicate a flow-related issue. Phil also said that Dan Opdyke with TPWD has performed requested flow separation analyses for each of the flow gages, and that the BBEST will be using that information to move forward with the work of deriving initial flow regimes for each gage site. The next BBEST meeting will take place on September 21st in College Station. The group will be receiving some funding for the next fiscal year, and the goal is to have portions of the final report ready to be sent to the printer by the beginning of the calendar year.

Senate Bill 3 Funding Update – Ruben Solis (TWDB)

Ruben Solis with TWDB said that his agency was asked to find additional monies to fund the ongoing Senate Bill 3 activity, since the Legislature didn't provide any funding for FY 2012 and beyond. He said that \$107,000 for contracts and \$260,000 out of the

TWDB research and planning fund has been identified and approved by the TWDB board. The \$260,000 will be distributed among BBESTs from the Brazos, Nueces, and Rio Grande Basins. The Science Advisory Committee (SAC) will also receive a portion of the funds. Ruben also said that excess funds from FY 2011 can be used for contract work in FY 2012 as long as the contracts are let in FY 2011.

Corps of Engineers Reservoir Operations Presentation – Paul Rodman (USACE)

Paul Rodman with the Corps of Engineers gave a PowerPoint presentation on Corps-operated reservoirs in the Brazos Basin (presentation posted to website). He first identified the nine reservoirs operated by the Corps in the basin and discussed the primary role of flood control for these reservoirs as well as the Corps' operational responsibilities. He displayed a diagram illustrating typical water storage allocations for Corps dams. Objectives of the Corps' flood control operations were given along with monetary estimates of flood damages prevented in the Brazos Basin up through and including FY 2010. Paul next presented 2007 flood hydrographs comparing with- and without project scenarios for five example reservoirs. He discussed several challenges facing the Corps' reservoir operations including dam safety, invasive species, and climate change. Paul then briefly presented information regarding the Corps' reservoir system simulations that help them manage the reservoirs. Lastly, he mentioned the tapered water release system after floods that helps minimize erosion downstream of a reservoir, and he talked about several examples of where actual reservoir operations deviated from normal operations.

Industrial Water Demand in the Brazos Basin Presentation – Gená Leathers

BBASC member Gená Leathers gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Industrial Water Rights Holders Overview" (posted to website). She discussed the TCEQ Active Water Rights database that is accessible to the public and explained the types of general permit information that are available from it. When searched for all industrial use permits in the Brazos Basin, the database returned 101 unique water right permit entries with 50 unique owner names, locations in 27 different counties, and a wide range of priority dates. Gená next presented two pie charts from the 2011 Brazos G Regional Water Plan that showed year 2000 and projected year 2060 proportional water demand amongst the different use categories. In response to a question regarding curtailment of rights during the drought, Gená explained that 600-700 cfs is needed in the lower Brazos River to keep saltwater back from Dow Chemical's intake. Brad Brunett added that BRA is currently releasing about 800 cfs from various reservoirs, and without those releases and wastewater return flows, there would not be much flow in the river.

Discussion of Funding for Facilitation and Other Studies or Analysis

Discussion first centered on the Flow Regime Application Tool (FRAT). Phil Price said that the BBEST will be looking at some water supply projects using FRAT once they have flow recommendations in place. They will work with Dan Opdyke or HDR to help get it set up. Dale said that perhaps the BBASC could work off of what the BBEST does. It was agreed that the first step was for the BBASC to have a presentation on FRAT, by either Dan Opdyke or Kirk Kennedy, at the October meeting.

Regarding facilitation, BBASC vice-chair Tom Michel discussed his experience with professional facilitation on the Trinity-San Jacinto BBASC, noting that the services were definitely helpful but probably started too late in the process. It was mentioned that the second round of BBASCs (Colorado-Lavaca and Gualdalupe-San Antonio) have retained facilitators earlier in their processes and have had more success. Gregg Easley (TCEQ) shared approximate costs incurred by previous BBASCs that used facilitators, ranging from \$17,500 (2 months) to \$30,000 (5 months). Tom asked other Brazos BBASC members to approach their organizations and/or interest groups for potential contributions toward facilitation services. It was agreed that this topic would be revisited at the next meeting.

Identification/Discussion of Important Issues to Consider

Ed Lowe (Environmental Interests)

Related to the previous agenda topic, Ed suggested that, since the parties involved in the BRA Systems Operation permit hearing couldn't reach an agreement in four years, a facilitator is probably need for this group.

Mary Ruth Rhodenbaugh (Public Interest Groups)

Mary said that she is worried about there being a sustainable freshwater supply near the mouth of the Brazos River.

Set Next Meeting

The BBASC decided to meet on October 25th at BRA in Waco starting at 10:00 am, with the expectation that the meeting would last 2-3 hours. Agenda items would include a presentation on FRAT and an update from the BBEST. Tom said that he would like to have a regional water plan consultant make a presentation on what the different regional groups have planned within the Brazos Basin. This would probably be an agenda item for the meeting after next.

Public Comment

None.